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RUTH LEVITT

‘A NOBLE PRESENT OF FRUIT’: A TRANSATLANTIC HISTORY OF PINEAPPLE CULTIVATION

The challenge of growing the pineapple in cold climates has attracted gardeners since the seventeenth century. During the eighteenth century Dutch and English pioneers experimented with seed and plants imported from the Caribbean and discovered how to persuade these tropical specimens to bear edible fruit in special hothouses called pineries. Britons and Americans later led the way with technological innovations, which underpinned new methods of preserving fresh pineapple and realigned the practicalities of distribution. This rare plant, once regarded as an exotic delicacy in Europe, and an intriguing novelty for gardeners, came within reach of all.

Richard Kensett (fl.1760s), a market gardener from the village of Stoke by Guildford (also referred to as Stoke Near Guildford and Stoke Next Guildford), in Surrey, delivered a basket of fruit to the Red Lion Inn in Guildford on 8 August 1768, with a note:

To John Wilkes, Esq. The most distinguished of Englishmen; the restorer of the liberty of the press, and of those of the British subject; this service of fruit is presented and begged the acceptance of, by his most obedient and humble servant, RICHARD KENSETT, Gardener.¹

That evening Wilkes (1727–97) wrote to his daughter from the inn:

Guildford, Aug 8 1768. My dear Polly, I set out from the kings-bench this morning at five, in a post coach and four, with the marshall and tipstuffs, accompanied by several other post chaises and coaches of our friends. We arrived here at nine. The grand jury met soon after. We were received with ringing of bells and general acclamations of the people. I have had a noble present of fruit, of which I have saved the pine apple for my dear girl. I am perfectly well. Adieu.²

How was it possible that a pineapple, native to the hot, humid environment of tropical South America, could be available in chilly eighteenth-century Britain, and not even in the metropolis? How common were pineapples in Britain and elsewhere at the time? How did Kensett grow or get hold of this particular one? What would it have cost to buy? And why would a humble gardener think it appropriate to express his appreciation of a celebrated politician with a pineapple? These are the questions that this article explores.

THE PINEAPPLE

The pineapple was first cultivated from around 2000 BC by the Tupí-Guaraní Indians, semi-settled hunter-gatherers, close to its wild origins in the Paraná-Paraguay river basin near the present-day borders of Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and Argentina.³ Their

presence expanded inland and around the coast of Brazil and they traded with other tribes, enabling pineapple cultivation to spread to many more places and peoples in South and Central America. Among these were the Carib tribes who brought pineapple plants and knowledge of how to cultivate them to the Caribbean islands. Christopher Columbus encountered the plants and fruits on Guadeloupe, Hispaniola and Jamaica on his second voyage in November 1493 and took specimens back to Spain. The Tupí and Carib name for the plant was *nanas* (excellent fruit), from which the scientific name for the genus *Ananas* was derived;⁴ the Spanish name was *piña* (little pine), from the fruit's similarity in appearance to the pinecone; the English term 'pine-apple' was first used in the seventeenth century, and later lost the hyphen.⁵

Portuguese explorers also distributed pineapple plants in the sixteenth century to their colonies in South America, the Azores, East and West Africa, India, China, and South East Asia. Dutch colonies in the East Indies also received pineapples from the West Indies. South Africa had pineapples by the mid-seventeenth century, as did several South Pacific islands in the eighteenth, and Australia by the nineteenth. Pineapple-growing soon became securely established in many tropical regions and islands. By 1971 the top five producer-exporters of fresh pineapples were Taiwan, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, Ivory Coast and Brazil; and of processed pineapples were Hawaii, Philippines, Taiwan, South Africa and Malaysia/Singapore.⁶

CARIBBEAN PINEAPPLES

Among the Caribbean islands, Jamaica has a long history of pineapple cultivation. It was peopled by the Tainos Indians when the Caribs arrived bringing pineapple stock and experience of growing the plant and putting its components to several uses. They ate the fruit raw, used it as a medicine, preserved it, fermented it to make an alcohol, and used the fibrous parts of the plant to create ropes and bow strings and to spin thread from which to make clothes. Jamaica became a Spanish possession in 1493 and remained under Spanish control for over 160 years until the British Navy seized the island in 1655. It was a British colony until it gained independence in 1962. The island's historic and close association with the pineapple was recognized in the Great Seal granted to the colony by King William and Queen Mary in October 1692.⁷ One side bears the effigies of a monarch being presented with a pineapple by an Indian, and the coat of arms of Jamaica: a cross with five pineapples and an alligator crest, which is still retained in the arms of independent Jamaica (Figure 1). One of the two commonest varieties of pineapple to this day is called the Jamaica.

Sir Hans Sloane (1660–1753), a physician, natural historian and collector of curiosities, published a two-volume account of the natural history of Jamaica based on his time there as the Duke of Albemarle's physician when the duke was Governor of Jamaica (1687–88). Sloane wrote of the pineapple:

This Fruit is planted and us'd by way of desert (having a very fine flavour and tast[e]) all over the hot West-Indies, either raw or, when not yet ripe, candied, and is accounted the most delicious Fruit these places, or the World affords, having the flavour of Raspberries, Strawberries, etc., but they seem to me not to be so extremely pleasant, but too [sour], setting the Teeth on edge very speedily [...] It is clear'd of its outward Skin when ripe, and cut into slices, and so eaten, the middle fibrous or woody part being thrown away. It is known when ripe by the colour of the tuft of Leaves at top, which then turn yellow, and will easily come off with the least pulling. This Tuft as well as young Spouts or Succors from the old ones sides, are planted in any hot Soil, and seldom miss to prosper. The slices are soaked in Canary [a fortified wine] to take of the sharpness which commonly otherwise inflames the Throat, and then they are eaten.⁸



Figure 1. Great Seal of Jamaica at independence, 1962; modified from the design first granted to the colony in 1661 by Charles II. Image of a ceramic replica courtesy of the Jamaican High Commission, London

Colonial settlers later exported 'Pine-Apple rums' to Europe; one London brandy merchant advertised: 'Pine Apple Rum. 14s. per gallon from Jamaican Pine-Apples, imported by J. Buckmaster, opposite the Asylum, Lambeth from his uncle Samuel Buckmaster, Windsor Castle Plantation, Jamaica.'⁹ Long's Foreign Warehouse at Lombard Street in London imported 'Orange and Pine Apple Jam; Pine Apples, and Preserved Mangoes'.¹⁰

Nevertheless, supplying the uncertain foreign market for pineapple on a commercial scale was a less attractive option for most British settlers on Jamaica than building up sugar and coffee plantations. Foreign demand for sugar and coffee was better known and rising rapidly, and growers developed a huge and lucrative trade with Britain and Ireland, and with Britain's American colony. They were assisted by British law which, until 1846, prohibited importation into Britain of sugar unless it came from the British West Indies. By 1780 there were 700 Jamaican estates planted with sugar cane, 1,000 acres on average, earning the equivalent of over £200,000 per annum today. Every estate had kitchen gardens to grow vegetables and fruits, including pineapples, to feed the white occupants.

These plantations relied on an immense population of slaves shipped from Africa. By 1650 about 850,000 Africans had been transported across the Atlantic from West Africa. In the seventeenth century the British Caribbean colonies of Jamaica, Barbados, Antigua, St Kitts and Nevis had 250,000 African slaves. Jamaica received over 1 million slaves between 1651 and 1825, at the rate of 10,800 per year in the peak years of 1751–75.¹¹ Almost 130,000 African slaves were working on the island in 1789;¹² and in the following year the total population of Jamaica was officially recorded as 256,000 negro slaves, 4093 free negroes and 23,000 whites.¹³ Britain prohibited mainland and colonial trade with America after the American War of Independence (1775–83), and America introduced a non-importation agreement that boycotted British (including colonial) imports; Britain also imposed taxes on Jamaica's exports to Britain. These measures greatly affected the economics of Jamaica's foreign trade, as did the abolition of slavery there in 1834. Although whole pineapple plants could be exported from Jamaica to America and Europe by sea, the fresh fruit itself was commonly candied before transit as it was too perishable to survive that long ordeal before the introduction of faster steamships.

PINEAPPLES IN EUROPE

Rulers and statesmen were presented with all sorts of plants, animals and objects brought back as trophies from their newly acquired colonial outposts, which fuelled an already lively interest among European elites in exotic foreign cultures. After Columbus's journeys in the fifteenth century, it was probably not until the seventeenth century that many Europeans first saw pineapples with their own eyes.¹⁴ Indeed, the philosopher John Locke (1632–1704) discussed the unseen and untasted pineapple as the symbol of an exotic object which could not be known until it had been seen and tasted.¹⁵ John Evelyn (1620–1706) wrote in his diary on 9 August 1661: 'I first saw the famous Queen Pine, brought from Barbadoes and presented to his Majestie, but the first that were ever seen in England were those sent to Cromwell four years since.'¹⁶ And on 19 August 1668:

Standing by his Majestie in the Presence, there was of that rare fruit called the King-Pine, growing in the Barbadoes and the West Indies, the first of them I had ever seen. His Majestie having cut it up, was pleased to give me a piece off his owne plate to tast of, but in my opinion it falls short of those ravishing varieties of deliciousnesse described in cap. liggons history & others but possibly it might be, and certainly was, much impaired in coming so farr. It has yet a graceful acidity, but tastes more of the Quince and Melon, than of any other fruite he mentions.¹⁷

Evelyn was referring to *A True & Exact History of the Island of Barbadoes* (1657) by Richard Ligon (1585–1622), a Royalist who chose to leave England between 1647 and 1650, during the Civil War and Oliver Cromwell's rise. He joined an expedition to the Caribbean and lived on Barbados for much of his time, probably working on a plantation as an overseer. The island had become a British colony in the 1620s and Ligon closely observed the system of growing and processing sugar cane, and the work of the slaves. He was very impressed with the island's flora and above all with its pineapples, which he described with palpable enthusiasm:

When this fruit is grown to a likeness, you shall perceive it by the smell, which is far beyond the smell of our choicest fruits of Europe, as the taste is beyond theirs ... The rind being taken off, we lay the fruit in a dish, and cut it in slices half an inch thick; and as the knife goes in, there issues out of the pores of the fruit, a liquor, clear as Rock-water, near about six spoonfuls, which is eaten with a spoon; and as you taste it, you find it in a high degree delicious, but so mild as you can distinguish no taste at all; but when you bite a piece of the fruit, it is so violently sharp, as you would think it would fetch all the skin off your mouth; but before your tongue have made a second trial upon your palate, you shall perceive such a sweetness to follow, as perfectly to cure that vigorous sharpness.¹⁸

Ligon pondered how he could bring pineapple plants to England, and admitted that he did not know a way that would protect them from spoiling while maintaining their taste and structure, so: 'We brought in the ship seventeen of several growths, but all rotten before we came half the way.'¹⁹

Europeans did try to grow pineapples from the few specimens that survived the journey from the West Indies, but their efforts did not result in fruiting plants. To achieve that goal they needed to create much warmer growing conditions, to secure year-round soil and air temperatures of about 21°C (70°F). Agneta Block (1629–1704), a well-to-do collector, patron and artist who was much interested in horticulture, is credited by some sources with the first Dutch success at growing pineapples in the late 1680s or early 1690s, at Vijverhof, her country house on the River Vecht, twenty-five kilometres midway between Amsterdam and Utrecht.²⁰ She raised fruiting pineapple plants from seed imported from the West Indies, and commemorated the achievement by commissioning

Jan Weenix to paint her portrait and by having a silver coin (1700) struck with the inscription 'Art and labour succeed where nature lacks'.²¹ Around the same time the Dutch cloth merchant and economist Pieter de la Court (1618–85) and his head gardener Willem de Vink were also experimenting with pineapple cultivation at the country house Meerburg near Leiden.²² His son, Pieter de la Court van de Voort (1664–1739), also in the cloth trade, became internationally renowned for his cultivation of pineapple plants at Allmansgeest (renamed Berbice in the nineteenth century), his estate at Voorschoten near Leiden.

These Dutch pioneers built bespoke glasshouses equipped with integral heating systems that warmed both the air and the soil day and night, in chilly winter and cool summer, and enabled the plants to respond by bearing fruit after two or three years. De la Court van de Voort's impressive results were soon being admired by other enthusiasts visiting from abroad, eager to see how the pineapple could be coaxed into fruitfulness, and he published a detailed account of his methods in 1737.²³ Hans Willem Bentinck (1649–1709), later Earl of Portland, was a trusted diplomat in the service of the Dutch Stadholder Prince William of Orange, and also the prince's garden adviser at the royal palace of Het Loo, about fifty-five miles east of Amsterdam. William and his wife Mary were keen horticulturalists; after their accession as monarchs of England and Ireland in 1689, they brought their plant collection to Britain from Holland and grew pineapple plants at Hampton Court as well as initiating substantial additions and renovations to the buildings and grounds of the palace. Their hothouse plant stock included a collection of exotics purchased from the heirs of the late Gaspar Fagel (1633–88), another enthusiastic horticulturalist, former Grand Pensionary of Holland, and adviser to William. Fagel had rented a country estate in 1676 at Leeuwenhorst near Noordwijkerhout.²⁴ In 1689 Queen Mary commissioned a Dutch expert carpenter, Hendrik Floris, to build three glass cases to shelter the exotic plants in the palace gardens, which included custard apple, guava, mango, banana, passion flower and tomato, as well as pineapple.²⁵ Plants were also sent from the Netherlands to England in 1719 and from France in 1730.²⁶

A newspaper confidently reported in 1724:

Our Gardeners have now got a method of producing the Pine-Apple (a famous West-Indian fruit) in England, the art being obtained by the Gardiners of Sir Matthew Decker, who went last year to Holland to learn how the Dutch, who have had it among them for some Time, produced this excellent Fruit.²⁷

The eighteenth-century gardening writer Richard Bradley described the method that Dutch-born Sir Matthew Decker and his Dutch gardener Henry Telende devised and the results they achieved at Richmond (from c.1714).²⁸ Other pioneers of pineapple growing in Britain were Philip Miller, Director of the Chelsea Physic Garden (from the 1720s); and William Speechly (from 1767), head gardener to the 3rd Duke of Portland at Welbeck Abbey.²⁹ Speechly raised seventy-eight pineapple plants for the duke from West Indies seed in 1768, although the fruit was 'very inferior'.³⁰

PINERIES

In Britain in the course of the eighteenth century, pineapple cultivation in special hothouses became the expensive but fashionable pastime of a small though increasing number of horticultural enthusiasts among members of the gentry and nobility, who had the skilled gardeners and the money to indulge in this pursuit. A pinery's main structure was typically built of brick and wood with sloping glass panes,³¹ enclosing a large internal raised bed, a heating stove and an extensive system of flues (Figure 2). One estimate reported in the

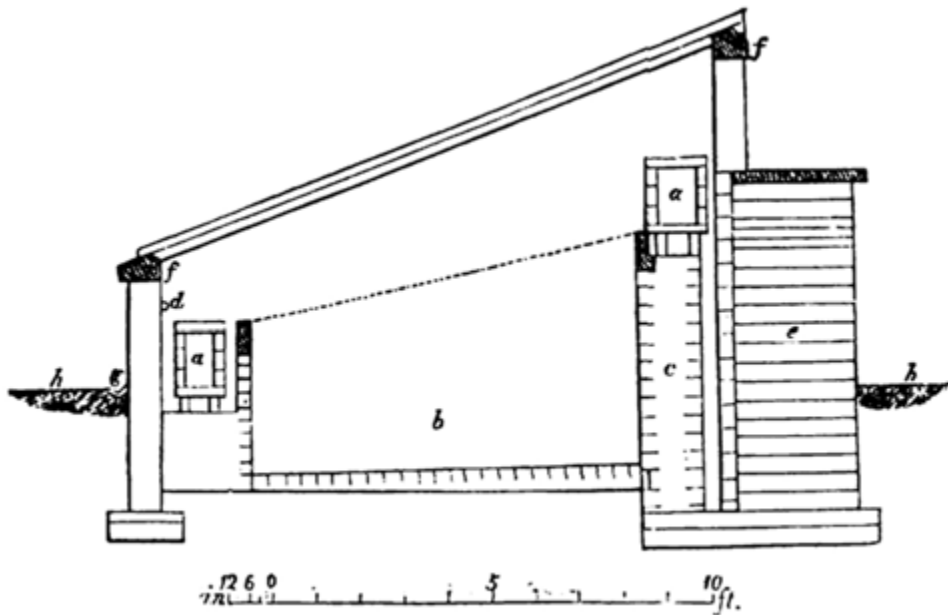


Fig. 336. Section of the pipe pit at Oakhill.

Figure 2. 'Fig. 336. Section of the pipe pit at Oakhill.', i.e. the fruiting pit; scaled section from John Claudius Loudon, *The horticulturist: or, An attempt to teach the science and practice of the culture and management of the kitchen, fruit, and forcing garden to those who have had no previous knowledge or practice in these departments of gardening* (London:

W. S. Orr, 1849), p. 445 (available at: <http://babel.hathitrust.org/>) (accessed on 9 August 2013)

Gentleman's Magazine of 1764 calculated that it cost £80 (about £9300 now) to build a pinery that could produce 150 pineapple plants a year; another £50 (£5819) for the plant stock, plus £21 (£2444) annual running costs (for maintenance, tanner's bark, coals, carriage and labour).³² The Earl of Darlington's birthday celebrations at Raby Castle included a dessert that was 'extremely elegant and sumptuous, for, among many Varieties of Delicacies, there were 24 Pine-Apples'.³³ It was fashionable in some circles to display the whole fresh fruit including its showy crown as a centrepiece adorning the dinner table, rather than to peel, slice and eat it.

Knowledge of the methods of growing pineapples in cold climates spread during the eighteenth century, especially in Britain, and techniques were further refined as the momentum of interest in pineapple cultivation accelerated. A provincial newspaper reported in 1743: 'The great Quantity of Pine-Apples, this Summer, in the shops of our Fruiterers, is remarkable, and shews to how Great Perfection our Gardeners are arrived, since they are able to raise here Plants and Fruits from the hottest Climates.'³⁴ Specially built pineries became more common, and one of them in Scotland even became a showpiece in its own right: the hothouse built by the Earl of Dunmore in 1761, complete with a massive 14 metre-high cupola in the shape of a carved stone pineapple (Figure 3). There was also a lively market for plant stock and pinery equipment:

To be sold as soon as possible. A Large PINE-APPLE STOVE, but lately built, with all its Materials, and eighty fruiting Pine Plants, and one hundred Succession Plants, all in good growing Condition. For particulars enquire of James Govan, Gardener to the Rt. Hon. The Lady Viscountess Windsor, at Mindenhall.³⁵

The pineapple's distinctive shape and crown of leaves appealed to architects, silversmiths, potters, textile and wallpaper designers and others, who used the motif



Figure 3. The hothouse (1761) at Dunmore Park, near Falkirk. Photo: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Dunmore_pineapple.jpg (accessed on 8 August 2013)

enthusiastically in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to decorate secular and religious buildings including the West Towers of St Paul's Cathedral (Figure 4), and the tower of the Church of St John the Evangelist in Westminster.³⁶ In 1750 at Westminster Hall a Gothic pier was built at the south end, which terminated in a carved stone pineapple.³⁷ Pineapple representations appeared on metal railings, gateposts, garden urns, coffee pots, tea caddies, fabrics, furniture and interior decorations. Nurserymen such as Daniel Grimwood incorporated the image in their business stationery and advertisements. His firm, Grimwood, Hudson and Barrit, named their shop premises The Pineapple at Arlington Street, Piccadilly in London, and the shop sign bore a pineapple image; the firm also used the image in their advertisements for their nursery at Little Chelsea, Kensington.³⁸

Although pineapple growing in Britain had started as an extravagant hobby for a few of the wealthy, it stimulated broader interest and demand, which in turn created opportunities for humbler nurserymen and market gardeners to invest in pineries and frames to grow the plants and supply plants and fruit direct to more of the gentry. Poet James Thomson called the pineapple 'the pride of vegetable life', although Tobias Smollett's Mrs Grizzle 'could never eat pine-apples, which were altogether unnatural productions, extorted by the force of artificial fire out of filthy manure'. Parson James Woodforde reported dining on pineapple; and in *Northanger Abbey* Jane Austen satirized Gen. Tilney's competitive ambitions as a pineapple grower.³⁹ By 1809 about 3500 acres in Surrey were under active cultivation to supply fruits and vegetables to London.⁴⁰ Some market gardeners also had 'green-grocery' or fruit shops in busy county towns such as Guildford, and could take their fruits to London shopkeepers who had an even larger clientele, such as James Gordon (1708–80), former gardener to Lord Robert James Petre (1713–42) at Thorndon Hall, Ingatestone in Essex, who set up his own enterprise in Mile End.⁴¹ A traveller sailing or rowing down the River Thames into London would have seen many nurseries and market gardens lining the banks south-west of the metropolis near Putney, Barnes and Mortlake.



Figure 4. St Paul's Cathedral South-West Tower. The gilded finial at top is shaped like a pineapple. © Julie Anne Workman (available at: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3ASouth_west_tower_of_St_Paul's_Cathedral.jpg) (accessed on 8 August 2013)

Nurserymen, plantsmen and seedsmen active up to the mid-nineteenth century, several of whom grew and/or supplied pineapple seeds or plants,⁴² include William Darby followed by John Cowell at Hoxton;⁴³ John Giles of Messrs Russell at Lewisham; Daniel Grimwood of Grimwood; Hudson and Barrit at Little Chelsea with their town shop at Piccadilly; Paul Dupin and Alexander Eddie, neighbours at The Strand, London; William Malcolm at Kennington and Stockwell;⁴⁴ several generations of the Henderson family at Pineapple Place off Maida Vale,⁴⁵ Edgware Road and Wellington Road; James Scott at Turnham Green;⁴⁶ Henry Scott at Weybridge, Surrey;⁴⁷ William North at Lambeth;⁴⁸ Henry Hewitt at Brompton; James Andrews at Vauxhall;⁴⁹ Thomas Jenkins at Regent's Park and New Road, Marylebone;⁵⁰ James Grange at Dalston;⁵¹ John Willmot at Isleworth;⁵² and Michael Rochford of Rochford's at Tottenham.⁵³

Writing in 1822 about European interest in pineapple cultivation John Claudius Loudon, who had travelled abroad extensively, reported that gardeners in Russia were the most active, with much less evidence from France, Germany or Italy, and none currently from Sweden, Denmark, Spain, Portugal or European Turkey.⁵⁴ According to Loudon, sixteen varieties of pineapple were most commonly grown in Britain, as well as another eight ‘of inferior value’.⁵⁵ The main ones were: ‘The Old Queen’, ‘Ripley’s New Queen’, ‘Welbeck Seedling’, ‘Pyramidal’ or ‘Brown Sugar-loaf’, ‘Prickly Striped Sugar-loaf’, ‘Smooth Striped Sugar-loaf’, ‘Havannah’, ‘Montserrat’, ‘King Pine’ or ‘Shining Green’, ‘Green’ or ‘St Vincent’s Pine’, ‘Black Antigua’, ‘Black Jamaica’, ‘Providence Pine’, ‘Blood-red’, ‘Silver Striped Queen’ and variegated-leaved pines. An engraving from John Abercrombie’s book of 1789 shows a ‘Sugar Loaf’ variety (Figure 5).

PINEAPPLE BOOKS

Revd William Smith, Rector of St John’s on the Caribbean island of Nevis, in the 1720s wrote *A Natural History of Nevis and the Rest of the English Leeward Charibee Islands in America* on his return to England. He observed: ‘Ananas, or Pine-Apples, are so common at Chelsea and other fine Gardens here in England, that they need no description, and I shall refer you to Laurence Miller, Sir Hans Sloane, and other books that treat of Gardening.’⁵⁶ Numerous treatises written by expert practising gardeners were published explaining exactly how to grow the fruit.⁵⁷ They described the heating systems they found could best mimic tropical temperatures without the stove going out, causing smoke, or under- or over-heating. Most writers favoured placing the plants in pots in raised beds containing dung topped with tanner’s bark (oak bark soaked in water), a natural source



SUGAR LOAF PINE APPLE.

Published by J. & W. T. Stockdale.

Figure 5. ‘Sugar Loaf Pine Apple.’; from John Abercrombie, *The Hot-house Gardener on the General Culture of the Pine-Apple ...* (London: Stockdale, 1789), opp. p. 1. Courtesy: JISC Historic Books: Eighteenth Century Collections Online (accessed on 8 August 2013)

of tannin, and an astringent used to prepare leather from animal hides, which ferments and gives off heat. John Abercrombie wrote:

[Pineapples] cannot be raised or fruited in good perfection without the aid of a hot-house or stove, in which to continue them at all seasons, having a tan or bark hot-be[d] made in a capacious pit within the hot-house, wherein to have the plants in pots constantly plunged to receive the benefit of the continual moist, bottom heat thereof about their roots at all times of the year, assisted by fire heat in winter, communicated by flues to warm the internal air in a proper degree nearly equal to that of the hot regions of [New Spain, Surinam, South America], from which the plants were originally obtained.⁵⁸

Adam Taylor explained:

Tan being so extremely useful and agreeable to the Plants by its moderate Heat, that it is abundantly the best, and will continue its Heat longer than any Compost than I am yet acquainted with [...] it behoves the Gardener to be careful in the choice of his Tanner's Bark, which should be neither too large or too small. The first is apt to heat too violently, and the smaller Sort becomes Earth too soon and loses its Fermentation. That which is of a moderate size therefore will best answer the End.⁵⁹

Yet opinions differed, with some favouring steam rather than tanner's bark. *The Observer* reported that: 'A mode has been discovered to rear pine-apples, melons and all hot house plants, by means of the necessary heat being communicated by steam, and is found to answer much better than tan, or any fermentative mixture.'⁶⁰ Gardeners nevertheless continued to refine the use of tanner's bark in the nineteenth century. For example, John Jackson at Newby Park, Topcliffe in Yorkshire, read a paper on this to a meeting of the Horticultural Society of London on 18 February 1834:

I have generally had my bark beds to turn and renew only once in twelve or fourteen months, instead of three or four times a year. My plan is to have the bed riddled over when I turn my pit, and then add as much fresh tan as is requisite; I further have about a cart-load of fresh tan, that has been well fermented with yeast for about three weeks or a month beforehand; I generally put from 5 lb. to 10 lb. of yeast into the above cart-load of tan, observing to keep it in a good shed, or any other covered place, till the great fermentation is over, and then I mix it up in a regular manner all over my bark bed; I never tread the bed down; I only level it, and put upon the top of it as much tan dust as I can easily plunge my pines into [...] I have sometimes had the heat stand at 80° of Fahrenheit for fourteen months within the bed, which is a long period, and may seem improbable to any man till he tries the experiment.⁶¹

Loudon's 1822 treatise on pineapple-growing set out the natural history of the *Ananas* and the step-by-step practicalities of growing plants to raise fruits from them. He described the approaches adopted by the 'most eminent cultivators of the pine-apple at the present time'.⁶² They relied on imported foreign seed or stock to establish new plants, and Loudon observed that: 'Of late years the pine-apple has been sent to England in abundance, attached to the entire plant.'⁶³

Growers had achieved significant progress in the fifty years since Richard Kensett gave Wilkes a pineapple. According to Loudon:

With respect to the difficulty of cultivating this fruit, every gardener, who knows any thing about it, knows it is much easier grown and fruited than the cucumber early in spring, or the melon at any period of the year. In short, with the single difference of requiring an artificial temperature, it is as easy, or easier to grow than a common cabbage.⁶⁴

In 1841 gardening was the single most usual occupation in Roehampton, where later Kensett generations were working. In those days a whole fresh edible pineapple was a luxury beyond the reach of ordinary people, whereas Loudon could say that moderate-sized pineapples were being sold on one or two fruit stands in London streets in the summer months for between half a crown (£18.65) and a crown (£16.70), or two shillings (£7.46) a pound.⁶⁵

AMERICAN PINEAPPLES

Pineapple cultivation was taken up in North America in the nineteenth century, much later and more gradually than in Britain and Europe, and on a much smaller scale. Apart from one or two reports of pineapples being grown by Americans in the 1760s and 1770s, it was well into the 1830s before pineries were built, such as those of John Perkins Cushing at Watertown near Boston and John Lowell at Roxbury in Massachusetts.⁶⁶ There were relatively few grand houses and gardens at that time, and among the mainly East Coast individuals who were interested in this new phenomenon, only some had either skilled gardeners or the level of ambition that the pioneering Dutch and English nobles and gentry had fostered. A comparable tradition of horticulture, horticultural and gardening writings, and reference works, from which they might learn and on which they could build, had not yet evolved in America. Copies of English texts such as Miller's were occasionally imported, but it was not until the 1850s that indigenous horticultural books and periodicals began to appear on a more significant scale.⁶⁷ Before then, some Americans could nevertheless buy pineapples, presumably imported from the Caribbean, as William Cobbett observed in 1820: 'Pine-apples in abundance, for several months in the year, at an average of an English 1s. each.'⁶⁸ Imports gathered pace as demand for fresh pineapple rose. Charles Dickens, visiting New York in 1842, wrote: 'We must cross Broadway again; gaining some refreshment from the heat, in the sight of the great blocks of clean ice which are being carried into shops and bar-rooms; and the pine-apples and water-melons profusely displayed for sale.'⁶⁹

From the 1850s, growers in Florida and California made serious attempts to produce crops on a sufficient scale to supply domestic markets, but they had only partial success because of the damage done by cold winter frosts. A new source of supply then emerged: tropical Hawaii, in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, which became another sizeable exporter of pineapples alongside the West Indies, Malaysia and Africa. The *ananas* may have been introduced into Hawaii by European explorers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but the country's commercial efforts were a late nineteenth-century phenomenon. However, Hawaii's large-scale exports of the fresh harvested fruit to America and more distant markets needed ships with refrigerated cargo holds, and these were introduced in the 1880s.⁷⁰ Until that technology was put into effect, there was an opportunity for growers and traders to use other methods of preserving fresh pineapples on a commercial scale. Journey times at sea and overland were the greatest limiting factor for all commercial pineapple growers in tropical regions wanting to export the fruit in the increasing volumes that European and American markets could buy. That obstacle was an important spur to inventors and entrepreneurs to develop canning and refrigeration methods to protect bulk consignments of fresh pineapples and other fruits, vegetables and foods from deteriorating in transit.⁷¹

CONCLUSION

John Wilkes's presence in Guildford in 1768 gave Richard Kensett the opportunity to express his admiration for the politician and, incidentally, to impress Wilkes with the

pineapple gracing the 'noble present of fruit'. If, as seems possible, Kensett had grown it himself, or obtained it through a fellow grower, he was one of the pioneers among artisan market gardeners seeking to bring exotic tropical plants within the repertoire of English horticulture in the eighteenth century. Through such efforts, and the experimentation by enthusiasts among the gentry and their gardeners in parts of Europe and North America, the heat-loving pineapple was coaxed back into fecundity many thousands of miles from its native soil. The fruit's showy appearance, distinctive taste and appealing aroma won it admirers in all classes and spurred growers into overcoming the obstacles to making it affordable for all.

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²⁵ Cole, 'Cultural history of exotic fruit cultivation in England', p. 194. One thousand tropical plants from Jamaica were sent to Hampton Court in twenty crates in 1692 by a London agent, James Harlow; pp. 196, 198.

²⁶ G. Gibault, *Histoire des Légumes* (Paris: Librairie Horticole, 1912).

²⁷ *Newcastle Courant* (30 May 1724), p. 4.

²⁸ Richard Bradley, *A General Treatise of Husbandry and Gardening* (London: T. Woodward; J. Peele, 1724), pp. 274ff.

²⁹ Hans Willem Bentinck's son, Henry (1682–1726), became 1st Duke of Portland, a politician and Governor of Jamaica (1721–26). The latter's son, William Bentinck (1709–62), succeeded as 2nd Duke, followed by his son, William Henry Cavendish Cavendish-Bentinck (1738–1809), as 3rd Duke and Prime Minister in 1783 and 1807–09. In 1767 the 3rd Duke appointed William Speechly his head gardener at Welbeck Abbey, Nottinghamshire.

³⁰ John Claudius Loudon, *The Different Modes of Cultivating the Pine-Apple, from its First Introduction into Europe to the Late Improvements of T. A. Knight Esq., by a Member of the Horticultural Society* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, & Brown, 1822), p. 6.

³¹ Between 1746 and 1845, glass for other uses was taxed by weight at about 6d per pound in addition to the existing window tax on domestic households, in force between 1696 and 1851.

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⁴³ John Cowell wrote a gardening treatise with a chapter on pineapple cultivation: *The Curious and Profitable Gardener* (London, 1730), Pt 1, ch. 2, pp. 21–45.

⁴⁴ William Malcolm, *A Catalogue of Hot-House and Green-House Plants, Fruit and Forest Trees, Flowering Shrubs, Herbaceous Plants, Tree and Kitchen Garden Seeds, Perennial and Annual Flower Seeds, Garden Mats and Tools* (London, 1771).

⁴⁵ Ray Desmond, *Dictionary of British and Irish Botanists and Horticulturists: Including Plant Collectors, Flower Painters, and Garden Designers*, revd edn (London: Taylor & Francis and the Natural History Museum, 1994).

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⁴⁷ Henry Scott's trade card reads: 'Pine Apples, raised and sold by Henry Scott Gardener at Weybridge in Surrey. Where persons may be supplied with ripe Fruit during their Season: – and Plants of all Sizes are Sold

at the Lowest Price. And as the Chertsey Coach goes every day from thence to London, ripe Fruit may be easily sent by that Conveyance and Plants may be safely sent by the Weybridge boats to London twice a Week.' Kath Clark, 'At the sign of the pineapple', p. 19.

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⁴⁹ Loudon, *Different Modes of Cultivating the Pine-Apple*, p. 125.

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⁶⁰ *The Observer* (9 December 1792), p. 2.

⁶¹ John Jackson, 'On the management of

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⁶² Loudon, *Different Modes of Cultivating the Pine-Apple*, p. iv.

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⁷¹ Canned food, first available in the early nineteenth century, was essential for travellers, sailors and troops, especially in America from the 1840s, a period of further westward exploration of territories and settlement following the Mexican–American War (1846–48) and the start of the Californian Gold Rush in 1848. Richard Kensett's cousin, Thomas Kensett (1786–1829), was a pioneer in this field in America, and his son, Thomas Kensett (1814–77), opened a canning factory in Baltimore in 1851. For further details, see E. F. Keuchel, 'Master of the art of canning: Baltimore, 1860–1900', *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 67/4 (1972), p. 351, n. 1; and E. S. Judge, 'American canning interests', in C. M. Depew (ed.), 1795–1895. *One Hundred Years of American Commerce*, 2 vols (New York: D. O. Haynes, 1895), II, pp. 395–7. In the first half of the nineteenth century several inventors in Britain, America and France also experimented with methods of refrigeration, and by the late nineteenth century cargoes of fresh produce transported at low temperatures would remain reliably fresh during lengthy journeys by water and overland. For further discussion, see Ruth Levitt, *Kensett: Artisans in Britain and America in the 18th and 19th Centuries* (forthcoming).